People-to-people contact between India and Pakistan

2501. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to answer Unstarred Question 198 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 28th May, 1998 and state:

(a) whether any NGOs are involved in developing people-to-people contact between India and Pakistan; if not, whether Government would consider encouraging NGOs to build better relations; and

(b) whether Government would consider inviting a goodwill delegation from Pakistan during the concluding ceremony of India's 50th year of Independence?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Government are aware of some India NGOs who seek to promote good relations between the peoples of the two countries. Government are of the view that enhanced people-to-people contact promotes good-will between India and Pakistan. Towards this end, Government have taken a number of unilateral measures to ease inssuance of visas to Pakistani Nationals desirous of visiting India.

(b) No such proposal is under consideration at present.

हज यात्रियों को दी जाने वाली राजसहायता को समाप्त करना

2502. **प्रो० विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा** : क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:-

(क) इस साल हज यात्रा पर जाने वाले भारतीय नागरिकों की कुल संख्या कितनी थी;

(ख) सरकार द्वारा प्रत्येक हज यात्री को कितनी राजसहायता राशि दी गई और वह किस-किस मद पर दी गई;

(ग) सरकार द्वारा हज यात्रियों को दी जाने वाली राजसहायता की कुल राशि कितनी थी, और

(घ) क्या सरकार इस राजसहायता को समाप्त करने पर विचार करेगी?

विदेश मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्रीमती वसुन्धरा राजे): (क) से (घ) इस वर्ष हज करने वाले भारतीय हज यात्रियों की संख्या 894,602 थी, जिनमें से 63,574 हज समिति के जरिये गए थे। हज में यात्री के व्यय को कम करने के लिए सरकार केवल उन यात्रियों के विमान के किराए में छूट देती है जो हज समिति के माध्यम से हज पर जाते हैं, ऐसा पहली बार 1992 में आरंभ किया गया था।

1992 के बाद से हज पर जाने के लिए विमान का चार्टर किराया 12,000 रु० तय किया गया और इस राशि और विमान चार्टर कं० के साथ तय प्रति हज यात्री वास्तविक विमान किराए की राशि के बीच अन्तर की पूर्ति सरकार करती है। इस तरह से हज 1998 के लिए विमान चार्टर करने के साथ प्रति हज यात्री विमान किराया 30,770 रु० तय हुआ था, इसके फलस्वरूप प्रति हज यात्री 18,770 रु० विमान किराया सहायता दी गई थी जिससे हज समिति के सभी हज यात्रियों को दी गई कुल आर्थिक सहायता 119.44 करोड़ रु० हो गई। इसकी पूर्ति नागर विमानन मंत्रालय के बजट से की जाएगी। स्वतः अथवा निजी टूर संचालकों के माध्यम से जाने वाले हज यात्रियों को सरकार की ओर से कोई सहायता नहीं दी जाती।

हज विमान किराए में दी जा रही सहायता को कम करने/समाप्त करने का प्रश्न पिछले कुछ वर्षों से सरकार के विचाराधीन रहा है, राजनीतिज्ञों, धार्मिक विद्वानों और शिक्षाविदों से परामर्श किया जा रहा है। अन्य देशों में प्रयोग में लाई गई प्रथा का अध्ययन किया जा रहा है। कुछ समय में इस मामले पर अन्तिम निर्णय ले लिया जाएगा।

Visit of envoys/emissaries to foreign countries

2503. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of special envoys/ emissaries who visited other countries to brief their leaders on the situation arising out of India's nuclear explosion; and

(b) the details thereof in each case and the out-come of the visits?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) *details of emissaries*

Shri Jaswant Singh, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, utilised the opportunity provided by his visit to New York in connection with the UN Special Session on Durga, to interact with NRIs, media, NGOs and academics in the United States. He also meet Strobe Talbot, Acting Secretary of State and Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations. Smt. Vasundhara Raje, MOS (EA), visited Hanoi, Manila and Singapore. Smt. Vasundhara Raje held meetings with President Estrada and Foreign Minister Siazon in Manila, Ambassador Tommy Koh and Foreign Minister Jayakumar in Singapore and, held a substantive meeting in Hanoi with Deputy Prime Minister (Foreign Minister) Nguyan Manh Cam. Shri Brajesh Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, visited Paris, London and Moscow. In London, Shri Mishra called on Prime Minister Tony Blair, in Paris he called on President Jacques Chirac and in Moscow he called on Prime Minister Kiriyenko. Shri Nareshwar Dayal, Secretary (MEA) visited Abu dhabi, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain. Shri Dayal held meetings at the senior official level in the capitals he visited.

Outcome of the visit by the Special Envoys

Prime Minister's Special Envoys were received at high levels in all the capitals. While there was an appreciation of the security context India was situated in, there were expressions of concern, particularly from the Western countries, who saw the tests as undermining their attempts at instituting a global non-profileration regime. The visits by Prme Minister's Special Envoys have ensured a greater understanding of India's rationals for undertaking the nuclear tests and presented a valuable opportunity to explain the various initiatives announced by Government in the wake of the tests.

U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service Office at Hyderabad

2504 SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Andhra Pradesh Government has requested to accord clearance for the establishment of a US and foreign commercial service office at Hyderabad; and

(b) if so, the action taken to accord early clearance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The US Government had requested opening Foreign Commercial Services Offices in some Indian cities including Hyderabad. Decisions in respect of opening such offices in Bangalore, Pune and Ahmedabad have already been conveyed.

Offer of mediatory role by Bangladesh Prime Minister

2505. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI VAYALAR RAVI:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister of Bangladesh had recently visited our country and held discussions with the Prime Minister;

(b) if so, what are the details of discusison; and

(c) whether it is a fact that Mrs. Hasina has offered to play a mediatory role in Indo-Pak negotiations during the course of her meeting and if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, paid a working visit to New Delhi on 16 June 1998 and